

and brought him to life again. This feature of the myth seems to indicate that in the beginning *Isis* was, what Astarte and Cybele always continued to be, the stronger divinity of the pair. Now the superiority thus assigned to the goddess over the god is most naturally explained as the result of a social system in which maternity counted for more than paternity, descent being traced and property handed down through women rather than through men. At all events this explanation cannot be deemed intrinsically improbable if we can show that the supposed cause has produced the very same effect among existing peoples, about whose institutions we possess accurate information. This I will now endeavour to do.

| 2. *Influence of Mother-Kin on Religion*

Mother-kin The social system which traces descent and transmits and father- property through the mother alone may be called mother-kin, while the converse system which traces descent and transmits property through the father alone may be called father-kin.¹ A good example of the influence which mother-kin may exert on religion is furnished by the Khasis of Assam, Assani of whose customs and beliefs have lately been carefully recorded have by a British officer specially charged with the study of the kin, and native races of the province.² Like the ancient Egyptians among and the Semites of Syria and Mesopotamia, the Khasis live goddesses *n settled villages and maintain themselves chiefly by the predominance of the ground; yet their social organization gods and presents one of the most perfect examples still surviving of priestesses matriarchal institutions, carried out

with a logic and thoroughness which, to those accustomed to regard the status and authority of the father as the foundation of society, are exceedingly remarkable. Not only is the mother the head and source, and only bond of union, of the family: in the most primitive part of the hills, the Synteng country, she is the only owner of real property, and through her alone is

¹ I have adopted the terms "mother-² *The Khasis* ^ by Major P. R. T. kin" and "father-kin" as less ambiguous: Gtirdon, I.A., Deputy Commissioner cms than the terms "mother-right" Eastern Bengal and Assam Commission, and "father-right," which I formerly and Superintendent of Ethnography in employed in the same sense. Assani (London, 1907).